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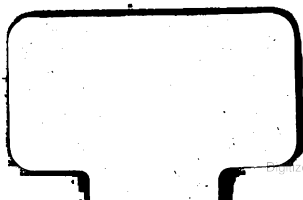
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The Bells of the Sanctuary.

A

DAUGHTER OF ST. DOMINICK.

BY

GRACE RAMSAY,

AUTHOR OF

"A WOMAN'S TRIALS," "IZA'S STORY," ETC.

(REPRINTED FROM THE "CATHOLIC WORLD.")

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1873.



TO
THE MOST REVEREND,
HIS EXCELLENCY FLAVIO, PRINCE CHIGI,
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO,
AND
ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA,
THIS RECORD
OF ONE WHO LIVED FOR GOD, AND
LAID DOWN HER LIFE FOR HIS VICAR,
IS OFFERED AS A TRIBUTE
OF FILIAL ALLEGIANCE AND PROFOUND RESPECT,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

A

DAUGHTER OF ST. DOMINICK.

IF she had been condemned to have her life written, and been given the choice of a name under which to appear before the world, this is probably the one she would have selected. But who could have persuaded the humble child of the grand St. Dominick that such a fate was in store for her, or reconciled her humility to accept it? Well, it matters little to her now, whether men speak of her or forget her; she is beyond the reach alike of their hollow praise and their jealous criticism. But to us it matters much. The teaching of such a life as Amélie Lautard's is too precious to be lost; it is a lesson to be sought out and hearkened to, full of light, and

beauty, and encouragement to those whom she has left behind.

Amélie was born at Marseilles on the 12th of April, 1807. Her father was a medical man, eminent in his profession and esteemed in private life for his honourable character and stern Christian principles. She lost her mother at the age of seventeen. While still a child, Amélie met with an accident which injured her spine so seriously that she grew up hump-backed; the progress of the deformity was slow and very gradual, but even when it had grown to its worst, it never looked grotesque or repulsive, nor did it, strange to say, take away from the singular dignity of her appearance, or even from the grace of her movements, and she was often heard to express her wonder late in life at the fact that she had never once been subjected to ridicule, or the contemptuous kind of pity which deformity generally excites in children or vulgar people in the streets. In person she was tall, dark, and very pale, not handsome, though her features had so much play and expression, that most people considered her so; her eyes were beautiful;

large, dark eyes, very soft in repose, but which sparkled and flashed, and looked right through you when she was excited.

Her intelligence, which was of a very high order, was pre-eminently endowed with that charming and untranslatable gift called *esprit*. From her earliest childhood she began to develop an angelic spirit of piety, and a sensitiveness to the sufferings of others, that is usually the growth of maturer years. The sufferings of the poor claimed her pity especially; but not exclusively; she embraced in her wide sympathies every sorrow of every degree, and every sphere that came within her observation; this beautiful characteristic of her charity, as rare as it is admirable, may be taken as the keynote of her life, and explains, humanly speaking, the extraordinary influence which she exercised over all classes of human beings, indiscriminately, who came in contact with her.

After her mother's death, Amélie became the chief delight and interest of her father, whose tenderness she repaid by the most absolute devotion. Offers of marriage were not

wanting for the accomplished and *spirituelle* young lady, who was known to be a model of every virtue, and an heiress on a small scale into the bargain; but Amélie turned a deaf ear to them all; filial duty as much as filial love had wedded her to her father, and she declared her intention never to separate from him, nor let any other love or duty come between those she had vowed unreservedly to him. It was probably at this period of her life that she bound herself exclusively to the service of God by a vow of perpetual virginity.

During many years, Dr. Lautard's health was a subject of constant anxiety to Amélie, until finally he became a confirmed invalid; she nursed him with untiring assiduity, never allowing her devotions or her work amongst the poor to interfere for a moment with this first and dearest duty. Dr. Lautard expired in her arms, blessing her, and declaring that she had been the model of filial piety, and the joy and solace of his life. Amélie made generously the sacrifice of this one great affection to God; she drank the chalice with a broken heart, but with an uncomplaining spirit, and entered

bravely on the new life that was before her. Hers was to be the mission of an apostle, and she must go forth to it unshackled by even the purest and holiest of natural ties.

She had long been a member of the Third Order of St. Dominick, to whom, from her earliest years, she had a great devotion. To her previous vow of virginity, she now added a vow of poverty, which, in the midst of abundance, she rigorously observed to the end of her life. Dr. Lautard, knowing her generous propensities, and suspecting rightly that, if her fortune were left at her own disposal, she would soon be despoiled of it, and left, perhaps, without even the necessary means of living, tied it up for the most part in annuities that could not be alienated. Amélie remained, therefore, rich in spite of herself; but she lived as if her fortune were not her own, spending it lavishly on others, and only reserving for her personal use what was absolutely indispensable.

While binding herself, however, to the practice of the most rigid poverty in her own person, she did not break off her accustomed intercourse with her friends; she continued to

receive them, as hitherto, in her father's house. Dr. Lautard used to say that hospitality was a virtue which it behoved Christians living in the world to practise towards one another, and he imbued Amélie with the same idea. Mindful of his precepts and example, she went on inviting her friends, and enjoyed having them with her and surrounding them with attentions, and seeing them well and hospitably served; at table she endeavoured to disguise her own strict abstinence under a semblance of eating; sometimes she would apologise on the plea of her health, which had always been extremely delicate, for not setting them a good example.

Certain ascetic persons, who could not find it in themselves to reconcile this hearty and genial sociability with the crucifying life of penance and prayer, and unremitting service of the poor and the sick, which Amélie led on the other hand, ventured to remonstrate with her on the subject. She met the rebuke with unruffled humility, but replied that it was a great pleasure to her to continue to cultivate the friendships contracted for her and be-

queathed to her by her father, and that she felt satisfied there was nothing wrong in her doing so, that it did neither them nor her any harm ; on the contrary, hospitality often supplied her with means of doing good ; a worldly man or woman, who would fly from her if she approached them with a sermon or a book, accepted an invitation to dinner without *arrière-pensée*, thus enabling her to bring them in contact with good influences in a way that awoke no resentment or suspicion, and often led to the most salutary results ; a friendly dinner was again not unfrequently an opportunity for bringing people together, and reconciling those who were at variance ; in fact, Amélie pleaded the cause of hospitality, as it was practised in the Rue Grignan, so successfully, that the critics withdrew, thoroughly converted, and rather ashamed of their censoriousness.

This thirst for doing good, which may be said to have been the passion of her life, was so unobtrusive, so carefully guarded by the tact which springs from humility and love, that it was never felt to be oppressive or indis-

creet; she had a way of enlisting your sympathies in a charitable scheme, or rousing your indignation against some act of injustice or cruelty, and drawing you into assisting the one or avenging the other, without letting you suspect that she had set a trap for you; never preaching, never dictating, she had that rare grace, whose absence foils so many praiseworthy efforts, of doing good without being disagreeable or tiresome.

Her conversation was so sympathetic, and could be, when the opportunity occurred, so brilliant, that the most distinguished men delighted in it, and flocked to the Rue Grignan, accounting it a privilege to be included in its genial and unpretending hospitalities.

Amongst the many illustrious men who admired Amélie's *esprit* and virtues, and who courted her co-operation in their apostolic labours, one of the most prominent was Père Lacordaire. The history of their first work in common deserves special record, not only because of the interest attached to everything connected with the memory of the "cowled orator of France," but because it is peculiarly

identified with the history of Provence, that land so dear to us all as the birth-place and cradle of the devotion to St. Joseph. "Beautiful Provence! It rose up in the West from your delightful land like the cloud of delicate almond blossom that seems to float and shine between heaven and earth over your fields in spring. It rose from a confraternity in the white city of Avignon, and was cradled by the swift Rhone, that river of martyr memories that runs by Lyons, Orange, Vienne, and Arles, and flows into the same sea that laves the shores of Palestine. The land which the contemplative Magdalene had consecrated by her hermit life; and where the songs of Martha's school of virgins had been heard praising God; and where Lazarus had worn a mitre instead of a grave cloth; it was there that he, who was so marvellously Mary and Martha combined, first received the glory of his devotion."

We all know the passage by heart, but I quote it not so much for its sweetness as because it so appropriately introduces the history of the work in question, viz., the restoration of the pilgrimage of St. Baume, a pilgrimage

once so celebrated throughout Christendom, but of late years fallen into neglect and almost total oblivion. Tradition tells us the story of its origin, its growth, its glories, and its decay.

Its origin dates from a little bark that, eighteen centuries ago, came floating down the sunny waters of the Nile, and rode into the blue Mediterranean, freighted with a legacy from Palestine to France, bearing in its frail embrace none other than the family who had their dwelling on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and whose names have come down to us crowned with the grand and unrivalled title of "Friends of Jesus of Nazareth."

Villagers, and the humble folk of the place, welcomed the exiles more kindly, let us hope, than Bethlehem had welcomed the Virgin Mother and reputed father of their friend some forty years before; at any rate, Lazarus and his sisters disembarked in Provence and remained there. The people gathered round the dead man whom Christ had wept over and raised to life, and hearkened to his teaching; he planted the Cross upon their soil, and sowed the seeds of the gospel in their hearts, and

they, in return, thanked him, as the Jews had thanked his Master, by putting him to death. Lazarus opens the first page of the martyr-ology of France.

Martha withdrew to Avignon, where, on the ruins of a pagan temple, situated on the Rocher des Doms, she built a Christian church, and dwelt there, surrounded by a school of virgins, teaching the gospel. She lived to a great old age, and died, venerated as a saint, and renowned as much for her sublime gift of eloquence and bountiful hospitality, as for the austere sanctity of her life.

We are not told how far, if at all, Magdalen shared the apostleship of her brother in Marseilles; the only trace of her preserved in that city is an altar in the vaults of the Abbey of St. Victor. These vaults, which resemble catacombs, are the most ancient monuments of Christian faith that Marseilles possesses.

The legend says that, immediately upon landing on the shores of Provence, Magdalen took up her abode on the rocky heights of St. Baume, and lived there for thirty years, her life divided between agony and ecstasy, between

tears that had never ceased to flow since that day when, at Simon's house, she broke the alabaster vase over the feet of Jesus, and heard from His lips those words that have been the hope and the strength of sinners ever since, and long vigils that were but a continuation of her faithful watch beneath the Cross and at the door of the Sepulchre.

It seems strange, when we think of it, that she should have left the country where Jesus had lived and died, the home at Magdala that He had hallowed so often by His presence, and whose friendly hospitality had been a rest and a comfort to Him in many a weary journey round Jerusalem; that she should, above all, have torn herself from the companionship of His Mother and the disciple whom He loved; for, surely, the one remaining solace of her purified passionate heart must have been to speak of her brother's friend and her own dear Saviour with those who had known and loved Him best, to revisit the places He had frequented, the sites of His miracles and His sufferings, and that Hill of solemn and stupendous memories where she and they had

stood together in a common agony of woe, hushing their own hearts to catch the last throb of His.

Was this voluntary exile from those beloved associations the last supreme sacrifice, the crowning act of renunciation that Jesus asked of her before He bade her farewell? Or did He express a wish that she and Lazarus should be, in a humbler way, to the West what Mary and St. John were to be to the East, and that they should forsake the land and the friends of their youth, and go forth bearing the good news of His gospel to France? He had raised her once to the rank of an apostle, that morning after the resurrection, when He gave her a message for the disciples, and bade her go and tell them and Peter that He was risen, and he may, before ascending to His Father, have once more charged her to go and be the harbinger of His resurrection to disciples who knew Him not and were yet dwelling in darkness. We shall know one day, please God, what her motive was, but, meantime, we may reverently conjecture that there was some such understand-

ing between our Lord and Magdalen which induced her to leave the country that was so full of the fragrance of His divine humanity, and where His immaculate Mother still lingered in childless desolation.

Magdalen came to Provence, and withdrew to a wild and barren spot upon a mountain, called Sainte Baume, in memory, no doubt, of her first interview with Jesus; it rises above a valley that runs towards the Alps from the busy city of Marseilles. Here she dwelt in solitude, communing only with her Saviour, and shut away from cruel men who had crucified Him.

Many and beautiful are the legends grouped by the simple piety of the inhabitants around the lonely watcher of Sainte Baume; they tell you still, in reverent and awe-stricken tones, how, seven times a day, the saint was rapt into ecstasy and carried from her cave in the mountain side to the summit of the mountain, and held there suspended by angels between heaven and earth, but seeing more of heaven than of earth, and listening to the music of the angelic choirs. The peasants

show you, even in these unmystical days of ours, the precise spot on an abrupt spur of the hill, where the angels used to come punctually every day, at their appointed hours, to commune with the penitent, and lift her off the earth.

For thirty years she lived here in penance and expectation. Then came the end of her exile. Mayhap Jesus Himself whispered the glad tidings to her in prayer, or perhaps it was only her friends the angels who were charged with the message; anyhow, tradition tells us—and who dreams of doubting it?—that Magdalen knew by divine inspiration when the hour of her death was at hand, and that she was filled with a great longing to receive the Body and Blood of her Redeemer before entering His presence as her Judge. St. Maximin, who had been the companion of Lazarus, and shared his labours and his pilgrimage, dwelt in the narrow plain which forms the base of the three adjoining mountains, Sainte Baume, Saint Aurelian, and Sainte Victoire, classical Sainte Victoire, under

whose shadow Marius fought and defeated the Cimbrians and Teutons.

The dying penitent was unable to traverse herself the distance between her own wild solitude and the lowly hermitage of St. Maximin, so the kindly ministering spirits came and performed a last office of love for the friend of their King, and bore her on their wings across the hills, and the floods, and the valleys, to the oratory of the saint. He, too, had been warned, and was waiting for her. He heard her confession, pronounced again the words of pardon that had first been spoken by Jesus to her contrite soul, and gave her Holy Communion. Then she died, and St. Maximin laid her in an alabaster tomb that stood ready prepared for her in his oratory.

The piety of the faithful surrounded the tomb with enthusiastic reverence and devotion; pilgrims flocked from all parts of the world to venerate the remains of the queen of penitents, and to visit the grotto where she had lived, and the oratory where she died.

Cassian, the monk, who was himself a native of Marseilles, after graduating in the school of

the Egyptian anchorites, returned to his native city, and raised the Abbey of St. Victor over the crypt where Lazarus slept. Sainte Baume and St. Maximin soon drew him with irresistible attraction; he founded two noble monasteries there, and he and his monks kept vigilant guard for a thousand years (from the fourth to the thirteenth century) over the grotto where Magdalen had wept, and over the tomb where she rested.

At the beginning of the eighth century the Saracens invaded the fair land of Provence, and, for nearly three hundred years, it was a prey to their devastating fury. During this long period of invasion, the Cassianites, terrified lest the precious remains of Magdalen should be discovered by the enemy and desecrated, thought best to remove them from a place where they were known to be, to one of greater secrecy and safety. They took the body, therefore, out of its famous alabaster tomb, and laid it in the tomb of St. Sidonius, having previously translated elsewhere the relics of the holy bishop. With a view to future verification, the monks placed on the

coffin an inscription, testifying to the two translations, and narrating the manner of their accomplishment and the circumstances which led to them. The entrance to the crypt itself was then sealed up with plaster and overlaid further by a quantity of rubbish. But six centuries were to roll over the arid heights of St. Maximin before the entrance was to be broken open, and the written testimony of the Cassianites invoked.

When the wars of the Saracens were over, and men began to breathe in peace, and turn their thoughts once more to the worship of God and the veneration of His saints, the fact of the translation of the body of Magdalen from its original resting place to the sarcophagus of St. Sidónius had faded from their recollection; it was only repeated in a vague sort of way that the illustrious penitent had been removed to a place of safety, which was supposed to be at a distance. Some local coincidences pointed to the Abbey of Vezelay as the spot which had been privileged to receive and shelter her; by degrees this belief took root in the public mind, and the stream of

pilgrims began to flow once more, and with renewed enthusiasm, towards the venerable old Abbey of Burgundy; crusaders met there to invoke, before starting for the defence of the Holy Sepulchre, the protection of her whom the evangelists have handed down to us as the heroine of the Sepulchre; kings and prelates, warriors and poets, sinners and saints, flocked to the supposed tomb of Magdalen, till, in the words of a chronicler of the time, "it seemed as if all France were running to Vezelay."

God is slow to tell His secrets. It was not until the close of the thirteenth century that the illusion which had evoked so much piety and so many manifestations of faith from Christendom was dispelled, and the truth revealed. This is how it happened. I will translate from the Père Lacordaire, whose "Sainte Marie Madeleine" has supplied me chiefly with the foregoing details.

"Saint Louis had a nephew born of his brother Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily, and Count of Provence. This nephew, who, on the death of his father, became king under

the title of Charles II., had for St. Magdalen a tenderness which he inherited from his race, and which, though common to all the chivalry of France, attained in him the highest degree of ardour and sincerity.

“While he was still Prince of Salerno, God inspired him with a great desire to solve the mystery which, for six centuries, had hung over the grave of her whom he loved for the sake of Jesus Christ. He set out, therefore, to St. Maximin without any display, and accompanied only by a few gentlemen of his suite, and having interrogated the monks and the elders of the place, he caused the trenches of the old basilica of Cassian to be opened on the 9th of December, 1279; after many efforts, which up to then had been fruitless, he stript himself of his chlamyde, took a pickaxe and began to dig vigorously into the ground with the rest of the workmen. Presently they struck upon a tomb-stone. It was that of St. Sidonius, to the right of the crypt. The prince ordered the slab to be raised, and it was no sooner done, than the perfume which exhaled from it announced to the beholders that the

grace of God was nigh. He bent down for a moment, then caused the sepulchre to be closed, sealed it with his seal, and at once convoked the bishops of Provence to assist at the public recognition of the relics.

" Nine days later, on the 18th December, in the presence of the Archbishops of Arles and of Aix, and of many other prelates and gentlemen, the prince broke the seals which he had prefixed to the sarcophagus. The sarcophagus was opened, and the hand of the prince, in removing the dust which covered the bones, encountered something which, as soon as he touched it, broke with age in his fingers. It was a piece of cork, from which fell a leaf of parchment covered with writing that was still legible. It bore what follows: '*L'an de la nativité du Seigneur 710 le sixième jour du mois de Décembre, sous le règne d'Eudes, très pieux Roi des Français, au temps des ravages de la perfide nation des Sarrasins, le corps de la très chère et vénérable Marie Madeleine, a été très secrètement et pendant la nuit transféré de son sepulchre d'albâtre dans celui-ci, qui est de marbre et d'où l'on a retiré*

le corps de Sidoine afin qu'il y soit plus caché et à l'abri de la dite perfide nation.'

"A deed setting forth this inscription and the manner of its discovery was drawn up by the prince, the Archbishops and bishops present, and Charles in great joy, after placing his seals again upon the tomb, summoned, for the 5th of May of the following year, an assembly of prelates, counts, barons, knights, and magistrates of Provence and the neighbouring counties, to assist at the solemn translation of the relics which he had been instrumental in raising from the obscurity of a long series of ages."

The news of the event was hailed with a shout of joy by all Christendom; kings and prelates vied with each other in doing honour to the new-found treasure; gold and precious stones poured in in quantities to adorn the shrine which was destined to replace the alabaster tomb of St. Maximin.

"When the appointed day arrived," continues Père Lacordaire, "the Prince of Salerno, in the presence of a vast and illustrious assembly, opened for the third time the monu-

ment which he had sealed, and of which the seals were certified to be intact.

“The skull of the saint was whole, except for the lower jawbone which was wanting;* the tongue subsisted, dried up, but adhering to the palate; the limbs presented only bones stript of the flesh, but a sweet perfume exhaled from the remains that were now restored to light and to the piety of souls. . . . The fact had been already made known of a sign altogether divine having been seen upon the forehead of Magdalen. This was a particle of soft, transparent flesh on the left temple, to the right, consequently, of the spectator; all those who beheld it, inspired at the same moment by a unanimous act of faith, cried out, that it was there, on that very spot, that Jesus must have touched Magdalen, when he said to her after the resurrection: ‘*Noli me tangere!*’ There was no proof of the fact, but what else

* Seven years later, when the head was taken to Rome by Charles, Boniface VIII. sent to St. John of Lateran for a relic which had long been venerated there as the maxillar bone of Magdalen; on adjusting it to the broken part, it fitted in so exactly, as to leave no doubt that it had been originally taken thence.

could they think who beheld on that brow so palpable a trace of life which had triumphantly resisted thirteen centuries of the grave? Chance has no meaning for the Christian; when he beholds nature outraged in her laws, he ascends instinctively to the supreme cause, the cause that never acts without a motive, and whose motives reveal themselves to hearts that do not reject the light. . . ." Five centuries after this first translation, the *noli me tangere*, as that instinct of faith had irrevocably named it, subsisted still in the same place and with the same characters; the fact was authenticated by a deputation of the Cour des Comptes of Aix. It was not until the year 1780, on the eve of an epoch that was to spare no memory and no relic, that the miraculous particle detached itself from the skull, and even then the medical men, who were called in by the highest authorities in the country, certified that the *noli me tangere* had adhered to the forehead by the force of a vital power which had survived there.

The piety of Charles of Anjou raised a stately temple to the penitent of Bethany, on

the site of the Oratory of St. Maximin. Boniface VIII., who had beheld with his own eyes the miraculous presence of the *noli me tangere*, endowed the basilica with royal munificence, and authorized the king to transfer the custody of the relics from the Order of Casisianites, who had formerly held it, to that of the Sons of St. Dominick, since become so renowned through the world under the name of *Frères Prêcheurs*.

A great number of popes visited the shrine, and every king of France held it a duty and a privilege to come to St. Maximin and Ste. Baume, and invoke the aid and protection of the saint; up to Louis XIV., hardly a sovereign neglected this public tribute of respect and devotion to her, but with the *grand monarque* the procession of royal pilgrims closed.

When the red tide of revolution arose, and waged war against men's faith, destroying its most touching manifestations and its noblest monuments, it broke harmless at the foot of St. Maximin; not a stone of the grand old pile was touched, not an altar profaned, not even a picture stolen from the mouldy

and unguarded walls; the most precious part of its treasure, the relics of Magdalen, which had been carefully concealed, were found intact, and duly authenticated as before.

Sainte Baume was less fortunate; the storm that respected the tomb of Magdalen showed no mercy to the grotto which had witnessed her ecstatic communings with her Lord; the hospital, the convent, and the church adjoining it were completely destroyed; nothing remained but a barren rock and a portion of the neighbouring forest. In 1822 a partial restoration was effected; the vast and majestic monastery was replaced by a temporary building of the lightest and cheapest materials, little better than a lath and plaster shed to keep the monks under cover; the grotto itself, once so sumptuously adorned by the piety of pilgrims, was left in a state of nakedness and neglect, its costly lamps, that had been abundantly fed with aromatic oils, and kept burning night and day, were gone, their lights extinguished like the faith that had kindled them.

The church was rebuilt in the same super-

ficial style as the convent, and solemnly reconsecrated, in the presence of forty thousand spectators assembled in the forest and in the plain below. But the material temple, great or small, is more easily rebuilt than the spiritual one; the temple of stone was raised up again, but where was the temple of the spirit which had animated it? Where was the architect who would rebuild this, who would collect the scattered fragments and breathe upon the dead bones, and make them live, and bind them, as of yore, into a body of devout and simple-hearted worshippers? Many, remembering the bygone glories of Sainte Baume, wished that a prophet might arise and work this wonder in Provence. Perhaps the wish took the form of a prayer in some fervent hearts, and so brought about its accomplishment.

That valiant-hearted son of St. Dominick, the Père Lacordaire, was destined to be the prophet of their desires. He rose up and upbraided the people of Provence for their ingratitude to the memory of their illustrious patroness, and for their decayed faith, and

exhorted them to stir up the dying embers of a devotion that had formerly been the joy and edification of Christendom, to repair and beautify the deserted grotto of Mary Magdalen, to re-kindle its lamps, and restore the pilgrimage of Sainte Baume in its ancient fervour.

The work was one that appealed strongly to the sympathies of the Marseillaise, but this was not enough. To make their sympathy effectual, the Père Lacordaire needed a help-mate who would go to work amongst the people and put their good will into practical shape, some one who would second his exertions by docile and intelligent co-operation. He looked around him, and his eye fell upon Amélie. He knew her, and conjectured rightly that she was the instrument to suit his purpose.

It was no easy or pleasant task, the setting on foot of a movement such as this; the preliminaries were sure to be full of difficulties, often of the sort that make self-love wince and smart; there was plenty of ridicule in store, a goodly harvest of sneers and snubs to be garnered at the outset, rude opposition to be

endured from those who had no faith at all, and chilling indifference from those who look upon anything like a revival of the forms and symbols of the Middle Ages as poetic enthusiasm, at best not practicable in the nineteenth century.

It was just the sort of work to put the daughter of St. Dominick to. She did not disappoint the Père Lacordaire, but responded as promptly to the call as his own fiery spirit could have wished. In Amélie's house the eloquent Dominican inaugurated the *œuvre* of Sainte Baume, and told the story of the great penitent's life and death. From the pretty and simple salon in the Rue Grignan the burning words went forth to all Provence, and stirred many hearts.

A committee was first formed for raising the necessary funds towards the restoration of the grotto, as a preliminary to the re-opening of the pilgrimage, and the Père Lacordaire, as if the more prominently to record the services Amélie had rendered in the work, so far as to associate her name with its progress, desired that the meetings should be held at her house

This was done, and continued to be so regularly, until she left Marseilles for Rome. She lived to see their joint labours crowned with success; the grotto assumed, gradually, something of its ancient beauty.

An inn was built on the plain at the foot of the mountain, for the accommodation of travellers from a distance; pilgrims were once more seen toiling in great numbers up the steep paths of the forest leading to the grotto, and filling the glade with the sound of canticles; and the feast of St. Magdalen, the 22nd of July, was again celebrated with something of the pomp and fervour of olden times.

But events of this stirring and, so to speak, romantic interest were rare in Amélie's life; her path lay rather along the valley than upon the heights above. The doors of the Rue Grignan were often opened to the wise and learned, and, not unfrequently, to the great ones of the earth; but such visits were few and far between, compared to those of the poor and the humble, who beseiged it at all hours of the day; nay, even during the night she was not secure from them; they thought

nothing of knocking her up out of her sleep to come and assist a dying person, or to watch by some dear dead one whom the survivor was too timid to watch alone.

The poor looked upon her house as a centre of their own where they had a right to make themselves at home at all times and seasons; so much so, that Amélie, in order to escape from their precious but pitiless importunity, was often obliged to make her escape by a back door when some pressing duty called her elsewhere. But she never let them feel they were in the way. No importunity, however persistent or unseasonable, had power to ruffle her unalterable sweetness, or surprise her into a sharp answer or an abrupt ungraciousness of manner.

This home work was only an episode in her day's labours. There was not a mission, a school, a refuge, a hospital, a good work of any sort in the town that she had not to do with in one way or another.

Just as we often hear it said of a woman of the world, *Elle est de toutes les fêtes*, so it used to be said at Marseilles of Amélie, *Elle est*

de toutes les charités. One of the most venerable Fathers of the Society of Jesus declared that it was chiefly to her zeal and energy that the Jesuits owed the establishment of their mission at Marseilles. The Père de Magdalon looked upon her as his right hand, and enlisted her co-operation in all his undertakings. He used to say that it was in a great measure to her he owed the success of the Maison de Retraite of St. Barthélemi, the last work of his apostolate, and which he lived to see blessed with such abundant fruits. The *Filles de la charité* were long the special objects of her liberality and self-devotion. When these no longer wanted her, she gave herself up to the Sisters of Hope, how serve the sick, and whose presence was so much needed and so joyfully welcomed by the Marseillaise. The Little Sisters of the Poor looked upon Amélie as their mainstay whenever they were in any difficulty, and they still speak with tears in their eyes of the many proofs of kindness and generosity they received from her, and of her unfailing readiness to help them at all times and under all circumstances. She seemed, in

fact, to hire herself out as a beast of burthen to every one who wanted her, and for as long as they wanted her; and when they had done with her, she passed herself on to the next.

When the question was raised of establishing the Frères Prêcheurs at Marseilles, she multiplied herself tenfold; no obstacles could deter her in the service of her beloved St. Dominick. She made ready a house for the Fathers, and paid all the preliminary expenses of their installation. Whatever the work was that came under her hand she did it, and as promptly and earnestly as if it were the one of all others most agreeable to her; there was no exclusiveness, no narrowing of her sympathies to an *idée fixe* either in piety or in charity. Those who had the privilege of being her fellow-labourers for many years declare they never once knew her charity to flag or fail to answer a fresh demand upon it; the supply was inexhaustible, and seemed to increase in proportion as it spent itself. Her activity was extraordinary; and considering the infirmities she suffered from during the greater part of her

life, the amount of work she contrived to get through is little short of heroic.

She rose habitually at five, spent several hours in prayer, and assisted at the Holy Sacrifice before beginning the active duties of the day. These lay wherever there were sick to be tended, or sorrowing ones to be comforted, or sinners to be converted. She was a member of the congregation of St. Elizabeth for visiting the hospitals, and gave a good deal of time to this work, for which she had a particular devotion. Her gentleness, aided by a most attractive manner and a singularly sweet voice, fitted her especially for dealing with aching bodies and sorrowing hearts, and it was no rare thing for her to succeed in melting the obduracy of some poor sinner with whom the arguments and entreaties of nuns and priests had failed.

The same sympathetic responsiveness that enabled her to throw herself into such a multifarious variety of good works, marked her intercourse with individuals. Those whom she was nursing, or comforting, or advising, always felt that for the time being they were the

chief object, that she was giving her whole heart to them. She made this impression more especially on the poor, to whom the sympathy and affectionate familiarity of those above them has such a charm and such a power of healing. An amusing instance of it occurred once in the case of an old woman whom Amélie had been nursing for some time; she put so much *empressement* into all she did, and performed the offices of a sick-nurse so tenderly, that the old woman fancied she had inspired her nurse with a strong personal attachment; she returned it enthusiastically, and was never tired of caressing Amélie, and assuring her of her gratitude and love. One day, however, Amélie arrived in the poor little garret, tidy and clean, thanks to her, but instead of being welcomed with the usual smiles and embraces, the old woman set her face like a flint, and preserved a sullen silence. For some time she obstinately refused to say what was amiss with her; but finally, thawed by the coaxing and the evident distress of her nurse, she confessed that she had just made a discovery which filled her with bitter disap-

pointment; "I thought," she said, "that you were fond of me, but I find I was mistaken; you don't care a straw for me, you do for every sick body in the town just what you have been doing for me."

It was with great difficulty that Amélie was able to calm the poor old soul, and obtain her forgiveness, for being so universal in her charity. But though her charity dealt in no exclusions, there were two classes of her fellow-creatures who above the rest had a decided attraction for Amélie: these were prisoners and soldiers. She yearned towards the former with the true spirit of Him who loved the publicans and sinners, and gave the first fruits of His death to them on Calvary, and who prayed for them all with His last breath, saying:—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

The wonders that Amélie worked in the gloomy cells of the Fort St. Nicolas, the sudden and admirable returns to God that she obtained from the condemned, are not to be counted, not by men at least. Day after day she was to be found in the midst of them, instructing old men in their catechism, teaching some how to say

the rosary, encouraging and exhorting others, preparing the dying for death, washing and dressing the sores of the sick, combing their hair, performing cheerfully and affectionately the most menial and disgusting offices.

But her labours amongst the troops were undoubtedly the most remarkable part of her life. She had for many years been untiring in her efforts to promote religious instruction amongst the soldiers; her mission in this direction dates chiefly, however, from the Crimean war. During this brilliant campaign, which brought so much glory, and cost so much blood to our allied armies, the thought of the sufferings of the soldiers in the trenches and on the battle-field, filled Amélie's heart to the momentary exclusion of all other interests and pre-occupations. Her whole time was spent in working for them, and begging, and praying for them; and she inspired all who came near her with something of her own ardour in the cause. She got up societies amongst her friends for making clothes and lint for the sufferers, and for collecting money to procure all that could comfort and alleviate them.

Now, as on many other occasions, money flowed in to her from all sides, sometimes from strangers living in distant towns, for the fame of her charity had spread much farther than the humble daughter of St. Dominick suspected; and many benevolent persons who wished to give, and knew not how to apply their offerings, sent them to her, satisfied that they would be well and wisely employed. The way in which large sums of money dropped into her lap as it were from the sky at opportune moments when she was in dire want of it, led many of her simple *protégés* to believe that it came to her miraculously. But while mindful of their bodies, Amélie's first solicitude was for the souls of the brave fellows who were going out to face death in the service of their country; she worked hard to procure what could solace and heal their temporal sufferings, but she laboured still more zealously in behalf of their spiritual interests. Her efforts did not confine themselves to the soldiers, they extended to the officers as well, and much more difficult she often found them to manage than the rough and simple fellows under their command,

Many a droll story is still told at Marseilles of the tricks by which they sometimes evaded her traps to catch them, and make them remember they had another enemy to fight and conquer besides the soldiers of Holy Russia. On one occasion two young lieutenants, whose lives were not the most edifying, were pointed out to Amélie by a brother officer, a fervent Catholic, as a fitting subject for her zeal. He proposed bringing them to the Rue Grignan, under pretence of introducing them to an old and dear friend of his, if Amélie would promise to try and convert them. She promised of course to try, and the two scapegraces accordingly made their appearance, suspecting no evil. The conversation turned exclusively on the great topic of the day, the war, Amélie carefully avoiding all allusion to the real object of the meeting. The young men were charmed with her affability and *esprit*, and when she asked them to return with their friend in a few days and dine, they accepted the invitation with delight. They came, and during dinner their hostess alluded to the numerous pilgrimages that were being made every day to Notre

Dame de Garde. Few of the soldiers or sailors started for the Crimea from Marseilles without climbing up the hill to salute Our Lady, and ask her blessing on their arms. The young men confessed that they had never made the pilgrimage, and evinced small admiration for their more devout comrades.

Amélie seemed surprised, but not at all scandalized at the frank admission, and proposed that they should both make the pilgrimage next morning, and hear Mass there with her at eight o'clock. They assented with ready courtesy, inwardly treating the expedition as a harmless joke, and took leave of their hostess, very much delighted with her, and not much terrified as to any salutary projects that might be lurking in her breast with regard to the morrow.

They were at the bottom of the hill punctually at half-past seven, and toiled bravely up to the church, where they expected to find Amélie on the look-out for them; but glancing round the church they saw no sign of her. Taking for granted that some lucky accident had prevented her keeping the appointment,

they took themselves off at once, with the comfortable feeling of having done their duty, and come safe out of it.

The morning was raw and cold, and they were tired after the long pull up hill, so on their way down they turned into a little dairy, where hungry pilgrims were comforting the inner man with cups of coffee. There was a good fire in the place, and they sat down to enjoy it, and dawdled a good while over their hot coffee, wondering what had hindered the enemy from appearing in the field, when, lo! looking up suddenly, they beheld her peering in at them through the window. The pair started as if they had seen a ghost. Amélie knew human nature too well to press her advantage at such a moment; she shook her finger at them laughingly, and went her way down the hill, leaving the two young men less triumphant than she had found them, very anxious to clear themselves of having broken their word to a lady, and eager to redeem it a second time, if Amélie wished. She did wish it, and it was not long before one of them blessed her for having done so. -His regiment

was ordered off, and before setting sail he ascended once more to the shrine of Notre Dame de Garde, this time in a different spirit, and with a very different purpose.

Her intercourse with the troops during this period gave her an insight to the deplorable ignorance in matters of faith that existed in the majority of men, and which was to be attributed chiefly to the absence of all religious instruction in the army. She was filled with dismay and grief at this state of things, and determined to leave nothing undone to bring about a change. Reforms are proverbially difficult, and in a branch of the public service pre-eminently so. But difficulties only stimulate strong hearts. Amélie was, moreover, owing to her high intelligence, her virtues, and her wide-spread relations, better calculated than most people to succeed in such an undertaking; whatever the obstacles were, she never reckoned with human means when God's work was to be done; she called Him to the rescue, and left the issue in His hands. It would be impossible to recount all that she did and suffered in this most arduous mission, the journeys

she performed, the petitions she drew up, the letters she wrote, the disappointments and antagonism she had to contend with at the outset, the physical and mental fatigue it involved all through.

For several months, for nearly a year she may be said to have lived upon the railway, flying to Paris and back often twice in one week; a journey of eighteen hours and the same back, frequently repeated, is a thing to task the strength even of a person in good health, but to Amélie—whose health was constitutionally and chronically delicate, and who hardly knew the sensation of being without pain, generally speaking, acute, intense pain—the wear and tear of these journeys in the sultry heat of summer, and the bitter cold of winter alike, must have been trying in the extreme. But she made small account of the sufferings of her body; she drove it on like a beast of burden, goading it with the ardour of her spirit, and never giving in to it until it positively refused, from sheer exhaustion, to go on.

These physical inconveniences were the least

of her difficulties. She had obstacles to overcome on every side, especially in quarters where it was most essential for her to find approval and assistance. Silvio Pellico declared it was easier to cross a battle-field than the antechamber of a king; and the same might be said most likely of the antechamber of a minister. At any rate Amélie found it so. Many a brave spirit might well have given up in despair before the contemptuous rudeness and petty opposition of small functionaries, and the inaccessible coldness of great ones, and the disheartening predictions of well-wishers who had gone through similar experiences, and knew what it was to get anything done even in the natural course of things, at the War Office; but Amélie's courage never flagged for a moment. Her perseverance at last began to meet with some signs of success. One military man in high repute was gained over to her views, and promised to use his influence to forward them. This got noised abroad, and others followed suit; generals who had treated her projects as impracticable or officious, or simply absurd, one after another came over to her. It

was not always that she convinced them, but she won them ; they might resist her arguments, but it was impossible to come much in contact with her and withstand the force of her earnestness and her sincerity of purpose. Her efforts were finally crowned with abundant success. She obtained all the concessions she demanded for carrying out her plans towards improving the spiritual condition of the soldiers.

One of her chief anxieties had been for the condemned prisoners in the Fort St. Nicolas. She got permission for one of the dungeons to be turned into a chapel, and henceforth it was her delight to go there on the great festivals, and decorate the altar, making it gay with lights and flowers for the poor captives. A chaplain was appointed to the fort, and he was allowed every facility for the exercise of his ministry. The little *enfants de troupe*, whose youth claimed particular interest, were specially provided for ; a school was established for them, and Amélie devoted a great deal of her time to presiding over it till it was properly organized ; even then she continued to go there

frequently, overlooking the progress of the pupils, cheering them on with advice, and encouraging the most industrious and deserving by little presents.

General de Courtiges, who commanded the garrison for many years at Marseilles, and left behind him a name universally respected, had been from the starting a staunch ally of Amélie's, and seconded all her endeavours to introduce a Christian spirit into the army. At her suggestion he organized a military Mass every Sunday at the church of St. Charles, and there a great number of officers and men, with the general at their head, assisted publicly at the Holy Sacrifice. It was a great treat to Amélie whenever she could make time to go and assist at it with them. She enjoyed the martial appearance and the reverent bearing of the soldiers with a sort of motherly pride; the sharp word of command, and the clanking of bayonets when it rang out for presenting arms at the solemn moment of consecration, used to send a thrill of emotion through her that often melted her to tears.

"Ah!" she was heard once to exclaim, on

coming out of St. Charles', "what a grand and consoling spectacle it is to see our soldiers publicly worshipping God! One feels they must be invincible in battle when they set out with His blessing on their arms."

The troops on their side repaid her solicitude by the most chivalrous affection. They used to call her *notre mère* amongst themselves, and it delighted Amélie to hear some grizzly old veteran address her by this familiar and endearing name. Sometimes the brave fellows' gratitude expressed itself after a fashion that was rather trying to their adopted mother.

On one occasion a regiment which had been quartered at Marseilles for a long time, and received many proofs of kindness and zeal from Amélie, happened, when passing through Lyons some years later, to hear that she was there. They started off at once in full force to give her a serenade. *Notre mère* showed herself at the window, and acknowledged the honour by bowing repeatedly, and smiling her thanks. But this was not enough; nothing would do them but she should come down

and shake hands with every man in the regiment all round.

Much as she shrunk from public notice or praise, her humility could not prevent her extraordinary exertions in behalf of the troops, and the success which had attended them, from shining out before men. The nature of the undertaking had necessarily brought her in contact with the most influential military men of the day both in Paris and at Marseilles. These gentlemen had ample opportunity of judging her character, and appreciating the nature of her exertions; and though they had for the most part opposed her at the outset, when they saw how successfully her perseverance had triumphed over their opposition, and every other obstacle, they yielded her an ungrudging tribute of admiration. It was proposed to embody this feeling in some public mark of respect and gratitude; the most graceful and appropriate mode of doing this they considered would be to present her with the cross of the Legion of Honour. Accordingly a letter was despatched one day from the War Office, informing the shy, unpretending friend

of the poor soldier, that the Government, in order to testify their approval of her conduct, presented her with the most honourable token of distinction it was in their power to bestow.

Amélie received the announcement at first as a joke. The idea of her going about the world with the cross, or the red ribbon fastened to her black gown, and being greeted with the military salute, and presented arms to whenever the symbol caught the eye of a soldier, or a sentry, while she threaded her way through the courts and alleys of Marseilles, struck her as something so altogether comical that she could only laugh at it. But neither the War Office nor her friends saw anything to laugh at in it. The latter combated her refusal so strongly that Amélie was perplexed ; she knew not how to reconcile her deference for their wishes with what appeared to her nothing short of an act of high treason against Christian humility and common sense. They argued that by accepting the cross she would excite a good feeling in the minds of many towards the Government, a result which in these turbulent and antagonistic times was always desirable ; and, in the next

place, it would invest her with a semi-official position that she might find useful to others occasionally in her relations with minor functionaries.

This last consideration had some weight with Amélie, and she turned it to account, though not in the way her friends intended. She wrote to the minister, declining gratefully an honour which she did not feel qualified to accept, but requested that he would recognise what he was pleased to call her services, by granting her a *droit de grace*. This would entitle her to present petitions for a commutation of sentence in the case of military prisoners, and even on certain specified occasions empower her to modify the sentence herself. The prerogative was granted at once, and if ever virtue had a sweet reward in this world, it was when Amélie exercised it for the first time in favour of one of the captives of Fort St. Nicolas. Her friends rejoiced with her, and almost forgave her for refusing the sterile honour of the cross. They never knew, so carefully did her humility keep its secret, that the Government, when granting the *droit de*

grace, exacted as a condition that she should submit to become a member of the Legion of Honour.

It was years after that a friend, who had heard something in high quarters which aroused his suspicions, and who was intimate enough with Amélie to take the liberty of catechising her on the subject, asked point blank if she was decorated, and under promise of secrecy, learned the truth. It was a singular proof, not only of respect for her character, but of confidence in her judgment and discretion, on the part of the Government to have entrusted her with this right of mercy; knowing, as no one who knew anything about her could fail to know, her extraordinary tenderness of heart and compassion for suffering, especially in the case of the soldiers, it seemed a risk to invest her with a sort of judicial right to interfere in their behalf with the course of law and justice; but they never had reason to regret it, she showed herself to the last worthy of the trust reposed in her; and in the exercise of a prerogative which furnished some of the purest joys of her life, she evinced a mind singularly

well balanced, a judgment always clear, and a prudence ever on the alert to guide and control the impulses of her heart. But when her judgment approved them, no consideration deterred her from obeying the dictates of charity. She was by nature very timid, and of late years, owing to her having quite broken off intercourse with the world, properly speaking, this timidity had increased to a painful shyness; whenever there was a necessity, however, she could conquer it, and face a gay crowd or a dignified magnate with as much ease and cheerfulness as if the act demanded no effort, or sacrifice of natural inclination. Such sacrifices were frequently required of her.

Her name had a prestige that gained entrance through doors closed to persons of infinitely higher social position and importance; and when a community, or a hospital, or a family wanted a mediator in high quarters, they turned quite naturally to Amélie. On one occasion her courage and good nature were put to a rather severe test. It was in the case of a poor man who was condemned to a long term of punishment for some fraudulent act; the

circumstances of the case, the hitherto excellent character of the man, the fierce pressure of want under which the fraud was committed, and certain points which threw doubts on the extent to which he had been consciously guilty, along with the misery his condemnation must entail on a wife and young family, roused strong sympathy for him, and a general impulse seized the townspeople to appeal to the Emperor for his pardon. But how should it be done so as to make the appeal efficacious? Whom should they entrust with the delicate mission? Every heart turned instinctively to Amélie; her name rose to every tongue. The most influential of the petitioners went to her, and besought her to go to Paris and obtain an audience of the Emperor, and implore of his clemency a free pardon for the convict.

Her first impulse was to draw back in dismay at the mere contemplation of such a feat; but the petitioners brought out an array of arguments that it was not in Amélie's nature to resist. She called up her courage, recommended the success of her mission to the prayers of the Marseillaise and the protection of Notre

the mazes of the dance. But the low sweet voice of the beggar rose above the music and the din loud enough to reach many hearts that night; no one turned a deaf ear to it. The gentlemen gave money, or pledged themselves to give; the women dropped rings and bracelets into the velvet bag that soon overflowed with its riches.

When at length all the guests had arrived, and the festivity was at its height, Amélie, after admiring—as she was always ready to do everything bright and beautiful that was not sinful—the brilliancy of the scene, the bright jewels, the pretty toilets, and the artistic decorations of the rooms, bade good night to all and to her host, and went home with her heart full of love and gratitude towards her kindly fellow-creatures.

I should never finish if I were to narrate all the acts of charity and zeal that she was never tired of performing; the following are, however, too characteristic to be omitted. Late one evening in her rounds through one of those dark centres of misery and crime that are to be found in all big cities, Amélie heard that a

mountebank was dying in a cellar hard by. She made her way to the place at once, and found the dying man lying on a heap of straw; but not alone; a bear and a monkey shared his wretched abode. They had enabled the poor mountebank to live, and now they stood by while he was dying, watching his death-throes in dumb sympathy. Nothing scared by the presence of this strange company, Amélie went up to the man, and spoke to him gently of his soul. If he had ever heard of such a thing as an essential part of himself he seemed to have altogether forgotten it; but he did not repulse her; he let her sit down beside him on the live, fetid straw, and try to soothe his pains, instruct him in the intervals, and prepare him to make his peace with God.

By the time her part of the task was done, the night was far spent; but there was no time to lose. She went straight to the priest's house, and woke him up. He returned with her speedily, and the two went in together. Amélie knelt down in the furthest corner of the place, and prayed, and the bear and the monkey looked on, while the sweet and won-

drous mystery between Jesus and the good thief was renewed before their blank, unintelligent eyes.

The mountebank made a general confession of his whole life, and received the last sacraments. Then the priest went home, and Amélie remained alone with the dying man, who expired a few hours later with his head resting on her shoulder.

On another occasion she heard that a woman, whose life had been a public scandal in the town, was on the point of death ; she rose at once to go to her, in spite of the remonstrances of those present. The character of the woman, her associates, and the place where she lived were indeed enough to deter any one less daring ; but Amélie, whenever an objection was raised on prudential grounds to her going here or there on an errand of charity, would point laughingly to her hump, and say, "Look at my protector ! with a chaperon like that a woman may go anywhere." She presented herself at the bedside of the unhappy sinner, who repulsed her furiously, bidding her begone, and shrieking when the name of God was men-

tioned; but, undismayed by a scene that practice had inured her to, Amélie held her ground.

Those who have heard her in moments when her soul was stirred to its depths by any strong emotion, declare that her eloquence could be positively sublime; she called it to her aid now, and pleaded with all the power and fervour at her command. She caressed the wretched woman, calling her by the most endearing names, and using every art and argument that could move her. At last the hard heart was melted; she burst into a sudden passion of tears, and besought Amélie to forgive her, and stay and talk to her, and implored her on leaving to return the next day. "But," she added, looking round with a furtive glance, "you'll most likely find a *monsieur* at the door, who will be capable of anything to prevent you coming in."

Amélie was not likely to be deterred by this. She came the next morning, and found the *monsieur*, who had been warned of her visit, and was on the watch for her. He accosted her with coarse words, and assuming an attitude of defiance, dared her to enter the room. On her

quietly attempting to pass him, he clenched his hand, and raised it with an oath. Amélie veered quickly round, and pointing to her hump, "Hit here!" she cried. The man was so confounded by the words and the gesture, that he let his arm drop, and before he had recovered from his surprise, she had passed into the room. He stood silently staring after her, and watching with a kind of bewildered curiosity all that followed. She left the house unmolested; and when a few hours later she returned accompanied by a priest, he was still there.

The woman, who had been a Christian in her youth, made a general confession in the midst of abundant tears, and died the next day in admirable sentiments of contrition and hope. The example was not lost on her companion; he became a changed man, renounced his sinful course, and returned in a sincere spirit of penitence to a life of honesty and labour. Thus Amélie had to rejoice over the conversion of two souls instead of one.

Her charity, as I said before, was essentially catholic, universal in the fullest sense of the

word; she was ready to pity everybody's troubles, and, with her, to pity, meant to help. The poor widow toiling, broken-hearted, for her children, in the courts and alleys of a great town; the father struggling with adversity in another sphere, trying to educate his sons, and marry his daughters, and pay the inexorable debt of decency that society exacts from a gentleman; the poor, lone girl, battling with poverty, or, perhaps, writhing in agonized shame at having fallen in the battle; the rich mother, weeping over the wanderings of a son; the poor orphan without bread or friend; the rich orphan pursued by designing relations, or in danger of falling into the hands of a worthless husband; high and low, rich and poor alike, all came to her for sympathy and counsel, and no one was repulsed. Even those difficulties which are the result of culpable weakness, and which meet mostly with small mercy, not to say indulgence, at the hands of pious people, found Amélie full of pity and a ready will to help.

An officer, whom she knew, was drawn once inadvertently into contracting a debt of

honour, which he was utterly unable to pay. Half maddened with shame and self-reproach, he went to see Amélie, not with the remotest idea of asking her for the money, but merely to get her sympathy and advice. The sum in question was two thousand francs; she happened to have it by her at the moment, and, touched by the sight of his distress, she fetched it, and gave it to him at once.

Her natural brightness and gaiety of disposition made her extremely popular with young people; she delighted in having them about her, and seeing them happy and amused, and would listen, with the liveliest interest, to an account of some *fête* where they had enjoyed themselves after the manner of their age.

This simplicity and liberty of spirit from all censoriousness in piety, and from that readiness to condemn things innocent in themselves, however dangerous in their abuse, so common with pious people, enabled her often to take advantage of opportunities for doing good which would hardly occur to a person whose piety moved in a narrower groove.

She was wont to protest sometimes very forcibly against the fastidiousness of good people who only recognise their neighbour in certain distinct classes of human beings, and who cramp their means of usefulness by refusing to do good except in a given sphere, and under certain fixed conditions; the sort of good people to whom no one is interesting who is not either a saint, or a sinner of the blackest dye, and who altogether ignore the great mass of humanity that lies between those two extreme categories. Amélie saw her neighbour in everyone, and made herself all things to all men. Whatever work fell under her hand she did cheerfully, not quarrelling with her tools, but making the best of them. As the dashing stream that "stays not to pick his steps among the rocks," so went her course, straight on, unhesitating, pouring its clear, efficacious waters over good and bad alike, profiting, as it often happened, by a fool's folly, or a knave's villany, to help an honest man, or further a just enterprise, or a kind action; she knew that the wickedness and injustice of a bad man can serve towards

the accomplishment of the Divine Will just as well, though with such widely different results to himself, as the best efforts of a good man, and bearing this practically in mind, she never allowed the badness of her instruments to deter her from carrying out a good work, once she had set her hand to it.

She was endowed with an ingenious knack of turning evil into good, that used to make those who witnessed its effects in her intercourse with others declare she had been born with the philosopher's stone in her hand, that empowered her to turn all she touched into gold. But the gift did not quicken her perception of evil; on the contrary, she was singularly slow to see harm in things, or evil in individuals, and when a sinful act was forced upon her recognition, she had more pity than censure for the sinner. "*Pauvre homme ! pauvre enfant !*" was her impulsive exclamation on hearing of a crime or a scandal; the first emotion of her heart was invariably one of sorrowful compassion. Her lamp was always lighted, but, instead of bringing the faults and shortcomings of others into relief,

it seemed to shed a mist of love over them ; she was ever ready to help the foolish ones who go about this world crying out to the wise ones, " Give me of your oil ! "

It is not only when the Bridegroom comes that we need to have our lamp lighted, we want it all along the road, for others as well as for ourselves ; we must even adapt it to the necessities of the way, by changing the colour of its light : when we want a strong, bright flame to keep our feet straight amidst the ruts and snares and muddy waters that abound at every turn, we must pour in the oil of Faith ; when our hearts are heavy, and our courage flagging, we must use the oil of Hope to cheer them and chase away despondency ; but we must be chiefly prodigal of the rich and salutary oil of Charity, for the light that it sends forth is often more helpful to others than to ourselves ; sometimes, when we fancy our lamp is so low as hardly to show the ground under our own feet, it is shedding, thanks to this marvellous oil of charity, a heavenly radiance on some weary wayfarer beside us ; luminous as a star, and soft as moonlight, it rejoices the

hearts of all on whom we turn. its roseate glow, it heals them, it takes the sting out of their bitterest wounds. Another rare quality of this incomparable oil is that it is wont to shine its brightest when we ourselves are sick at heart, and when it costs us a hard effort to pour in the oil, and set the wick in order. We do not realize this, but we can believe it by recalling the effect of a word or act of kindness shown to us in some well-remembered hour by one who was in sorrow, and who we knew set aside their own grief to enter into ours.

Let us be brave, then, to hold up our lamp, arm-high, that it may light the pilgrims toiling on all sides of us, faint and footsore, along the steep and rugged path, for its flame soars up to heaven and shines before God more brilliantly than the fairest and loveliest of His stars.

It has been already mentioned that, on her father's death, Amélie made a vow of personal poverty; this vow she observed with as much rigour as was consistent with decorum and with the absence of anything like a display of

holiness, a thing of which she was almost morbidly afraid. Her dress consisted of a black woollen gown and a shawl of the same material; her appearance in the street was that of a respectable housekeeper; no one who saw the outward decency of her attire suspected the sordid poverty that often lurked beneath it. She had limited herself to a pittance for her clothes, and she would submit to the most painful inconvenience rather than exceed it.

Once she gave away early in the season a pair of strong boots and a warm petticoat to a poor woman who was in great want; the cold set in suddenly with unusual severity, but Amélie bore it rather than replace either articles before her allowance fell due. How her health resisted the austerities that she practised in addition to the demands made upon it by her laborious life, it is difficult to explain without having recourse to the supernatural.

The devotion of the Perpetual Adoration was established at Marseilles under the pious auspices of Monseigneur de Mazenod, and Amélie at once enrolled herself as a mem-

ber of the confraternity. Unable to spare time from her works of mercy during the day, she entrenched upon the night for her tribute of adoration, and used to spend hours after midnight before the tabernacle. Fatigue and bodily suffering were no hindrance to the ardour of her soul; her spirit seemed to thrive in proportion as her body wasted. After a day of arduous labour, constantly on her feet coming and going amongst the poor and the sick, breathing the foul air of hospital wards, and cellars, and garrets, fasting as rigorously as any Carmelite, grudging her body all but the strict necessities, she was able to pass an entire night before the Blessed Sacrament, and be apparently none the worse for it. Yet this woman was made of the same flesh and blood as we are; she had the same natural shrinkings and antipathies; her body was not made of finer clay, or supernaturally fashioned to defy the attacks of the devil and the allurements of the world, to endure hunger, and thirst, and pain, and fatigue, without feeling them; she had the same temptations to overcome, the same corrupt inclinations to fight

against, the same weapons of defence that we have—faith, prayer, and the sacraments.

Where, then, is the difference between us? In this, that she was brave and generous, and we are mean and cowardly; we bargain and hang back, whereas she made no reserves with God, but served Him with all her heart and all her strength. He did the rest. He always does it for those who trust Him to the full, and hearken unconditionally to that hard saying: "Take up thy cross and follow Me." For them He changes all bitters into sweets, and all weakness into strength, for the old Adam that they cast aside He clothes them with the new, thus rendering them invincible against their enemies, and repaying a hundred-fold even in this life the miserable rags that we call sacrifices; He fills the hungry with good things, and in exchange for creatures and the perishable delights they have forsworn for His sake, He gives them His peace and a foretaste of the bliss of Heaven.

The two chief characteristics of Amélie's spirituality were devotion to the Holy Ghost and a spirit of thanksgiving; her prayer, so

far as we may venture to speak of it, seems to have been a continual exercise of those two worships. When any beginner in the perfect life came to ask advice from her experience as to the best method of prayer, and the shortest means of overcoming the difficulties and aridities of mental prayer especially, her answer would be: "Practise thanksgiving, and invoke the Holy Spirit frequently and perseveringly by aspirative prayer." It was an ever-recurring subject of pain and wonder to her to notice how sadly the worship of the Third Divine Person of the adorable Trinity is neglected even by Christians. And, in truth, amongst the inconsistencies and sins of omission to which good people must plead guilty, there is no stranger one than this. They pray reverently to the Father whose creative love has wrapped them round with such magnificent abundance, and tenderly to the Son who came and dwelt amongst them, and loved them unto death; but what amount of worship do they tender to the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Spirit of love and strength, whose coming was needed to set the

crown upon the work of Creation and Redemption? Why is He thus forgotten by His own, and left to roam about the world, an alien seeking whereon to lay His head, begging a place at the hearth of His own creatures? The spirit of Evil finds a welcome everywhere, every door is open to him, abroad in strife, and hate, and lust of conquest amongst the nations, at home in luxury and worship of money and comfort of the body. Is it because the "inn is too full" of His enemies that there is no room for the Paraclete, nor thought of Him in our busy, enlightened days?

Amélie probably did not solve the mystery, but she made her life a tender and faithful protest against it. The Holy Spirit was perpetually before her eyes; she lived in His presence, invoking Him almost with every breath she drew, and drawing hence a brightness and a fragrance that diffused themselves over her most common-place actions. Ejaculatory prayer was almost as natural to her as the beating of her heart; and to one who possessed her confidence she acknowledged that

activity, far from being a hindrance to recollection, as it is to many people, was to her a help; that it kept her thoughts away from self, and constantly occupied and preoccupied about others; a safe and simple road, she used to say, to union with God.

This profound sense of the Divine Presence held the supernatural before her with a vividness that invested the most common-place actions and persons with a high spiritual interest; she never lost sight of our Lord in His creatures, but in ministering to them constantly remembered that she was ministering to Him; and in serving them and soothing their pains and sorrows, she felt with a kind of sensible consciousness that she was serving and soothing Him. In the midst of her work, while going about the city, even when engaged in conversation, she was continually making aspirative prayer. Prayer was the strong tower that she had built around her soul, and within its adamant walls she dwelt secure from all unbidden guests; from *ennui*, that familiar demon of well-doers; from the pestering cares of life, those irritating flies that buzz about

the soul and disturb its peace so fatally ; from disgust with the monotonous routine of duties, irksome and often revolting to poor human nature. In prayer Amélie found repose in weariness, decision in all doubts, and a joy that rose serene and steady above every suffering and tribulation.

During her solitary vigils before the altar, the thought of the ingratitude of men, and the cruel neglect of our Saviour in His Eucharistic prison, sank deeply into her heart, and filled it with sorrow and an ardent desire to make some reparation to His outraged love. We have all read that wonderful chapter on Thanksgiving in that wonderful book "All for Jesus." Most of us have felt our hearts stirred to sorrowful indignation by the sad picture it reveals of our own unkindness to God, the sensitiveness of His sacred Heart to our ingratitude, and His meek acceptance of any crumb of thanks that we deign once in a way to throw Him ; we have felt our tepid pulses quicken to a momentary impulse of generosity and passionate desire to call after the nine ungrateful lepers and constrain them

to return and thank Him; we watch them going their way unmindful; we cast ourselves in spirit at the feet of Jesus gazing after them in sad surprise, and we pour out our soul in apologies, nay, so bold does the passing touch of love make the meanest of us, in consolations to Him for the unkindness of His creatures. Alas! with most of us it ends there. Next time He tries us, we follow the nine selfish lepers, and leave Him wondering and sorrowing once more over our ingratitude.

It was not so with Amélie. Her love did not spend itself in barren sighs and mystic sentimentalities. Stirred to her very depths by that touching and powerful appeal of Father Faber's, she began to consider how she could best respond to it. The idea occurred to her of setting on foot an apostolate of thanksgiving amongst the faithful, and of getting short prayers recommended to their constant use for the express purpose of thanking God for His countless mercies to all His creatures, but more especially for those granted to such among us as never thank Him on their own account. The notion was warmly taken

up by many pious souls to whom she confided it, and they promised to do all in their power to second her in carrying it out by labouring to awake amongst those around them this dormant spirit of gratitude to our Lord. With a view to aiding the success of their common efforts, Amélie wrote a little book entitled *Deo Gratias*, which she published and circulated at her own expense. The following are some extracts from it:—

“Hearken to the patriarchs, to Moses, to the prophets, to all the just in Israel! Oh, how I love to hear the people in chorus singing their beautiful canticle of thanksgiving after the passage of the Red Sea: *Cantemus Domino; gloriosé enim magnificatus est!* Can the poetry of any nation boast of a dithyramb to be compared to that glowing page, to that outburst of grateful love clothed in language whose surpassing beauty is unequalled by the most sublime productions of genius?

“Daniel, Isaiah, all the prophets, sang, in transports of love, the God of goodness, the God of mercy. It is written of Tobias, that, every day, he offered up thanksgiving; we

find this worship of thanks everywhere regarded as a sacred duty by the true friends of God. But what shall I say of David? Hear him crying out, in a rapture of thanksgiving: '*Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi?*' To appreciate the gratitude of the holy king, we should quote all those glorious psalms which the Church has gone on repeating after him for eighteen centuries. They are almost always hymns of love and gratitude, and canticles of thanksgiving. Recall those that are most familiar to you: *Laudate pueri Dominum; Laudate Jerusalem Dominum; Laudate Dominum omnes gentes; Confitemini Domino quoniam bonus, quoniam in sæculum misericordia ejus.*

"No, we must blush to avow it, but we cannot deny it, the feeling of gratitude with the faithful Israelites transcended all other feelings; they were incessantly sending up their thanksgivings as an agreeable odour that rejoiced the heart of God."

Then, turning to the new law, and summing up in rapid but burning words the unutterable mercies that poured out in a fresh tide upon

humanity from the mystery of the Incarnation, she goes on to say:—"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when He took upon Himself our human nature, took with it a human heart, a heart capable of thanking and praising God as God deserves to be thanked and praised, infinitely. . . . His life on earth was a perpetual example of thanksgiving. Ask His Apostles, and they will tell you how, when about to manifest the almighty power which He held from the Father, in raising Lazarus from the dead, our Divine Saviour exclaimed, lifting up His eyes to heaven, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.'* They will tell you how Jesus gave thanks before He multiplied the handful of loaves that were destined to feed five thousand men; they will tell you how He gave thanks when instituting the adorable mystery of the Eucharist, and how the holy band went forth from the cenacle after singing their song of thanksgiving. . . . Then look at Mary, the immaculate Mother of our Redeemer. Few words have been preserved to us from those pure lips, worthiest of all, after

* John xi. 41.

Jesus, to utter the praise of the Most High ; but what we know of the speech of Mary is an immortal hymn intoned by an overflowing gratitude.

“ With those words : *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, it seems as if the heart of the Virgin Mother burst open to show us the most ardent and sublime depths of gratitude, to teach us how to praise, to thank, and to bless our Creator worthily. Let us turn to the Apostles. How well they understood the duty of gratitude, the indispensable obligation of thanksgiving ! We need only glance over the immortal writings of St. Paul to see how his great heart was melted by the fire of grateful love. How the strain of thanksgiving runs through all his epistles ! Expressions capable of lighting this grateful spirit in the hearts of future generations flow in an almost unbroken stream from the inspired pen of the Vessel of Election, the persecutor transformed by Mercy into the Apostle destined to carry the Name of Jesus before peoples and kings ; words of thanksgiving and praise break from him in the midst of his teaching and exhortation as if unconsciously :—

" *Rejoice* in the Lord always, and again I say *Rejoice* ! Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God. . . . I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. . . .*

" *I thank* my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by Him. . . .†

" *And I thank* Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.‡

" *I thank* God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience.§

" *I thank* my God upon every remembrance of you.||

" *What thanks* can we render to God again for you for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.¶

" We are bound *to give thanks always* to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord.**

" *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns*

* Phil. iv. † Cor. i. ‡ Tim. i. § Tim. ii. 1.

|| Phil. i. ¶ Thess. i. 3. ** Thess. ii. 2.

and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, *giving thanks always* for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

“And *be ye thankful*. . . . Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks* to God and the Father by Him.†

“Such is the language which the Apostle of the nations continually held to the first disciples of the Gospel. Is it not still addressed to us? And how do we answer the demand of the Holy Spirit for thanksgiving? The Church alone is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever; her spirit is immutable, for it is the spirit of God. Look how faithful she has been to this worship of thanksgiving during eighteen centuries. Open the Breviary, the Missal, the Ritual, and you will see that thanksgiving is her constant thought, her most sacred duty, her ever present need and chief consola-

* Ephes. v.

† Coloss. iii.

tion. How the grateful chaunt accompanies the holy oblation on her altars! *Gloria in excelsis! Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam, laudamus te, benedicimus te, glorificamus te.* To the loving cry of the priest at the Preface: *Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro!* the faithful answer with prompt hearts: *Dignum et justum est!* The *Sanctus* is thrice repeated in union with the angelic choir around His throne. At Matins again the Church invites us to the glad duty of thanksgiving in the *Te Deum*, at Lauds we have the *Benedictus*, at Vespers the *Magnificat*, at Complin the *Nunc Dimittis*. At all times, and under all circumstances, the Church is in one way or another repeating the beautiful words of the royal prophet: Seven times a day, which means unceasingly, I will offer up praises to Thee as a tribute of love and gratitude.

"We call ourselves the children of the Church, but, alas! how few amongst us have not altogether lost the spirit of their mother!"

The little treatise ends by an impassioned appeal to the faithful in general, but more especially to the Children of Mary and the Con-

fraternity of the Sacred Heart, to unite in giving thanks, and thus renew the face of the world, as it was renewed by the twelve generous souls who followed Jesus and made their lives evermore a continued song of thanksgiving.

The closing page touches a lower chord, and holds out self-interest as a powerful motive for gratitude to such cold hearts as are insensible to nobler claims. "The soul that is grateful, that gives forth praise and thanks after every grace received, rejoices the Heart of Jesus, and draws upon herself a new flood of grace. The surest, the most infallible means of obtaining much is to thank much, to be ardently grateful, to fulfil generously the precept of thanksgiving. Oh, of how many special favours do we deprive ourselves by neglecting to give thanks!"

Not content with striving to propagate the spirit of thanksgiving amongst the faithful at large, Amélie conceived the design of founding a community of nuns, whose vocation it should be to give thanks unceasingly, and to console our Divine Lord by perpetually offering up

the prayer of thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament. Those in authority to whom she mentioned this desire approved of it, and several holy souls, smitten like herself with the passion of thanksgiving, offered themselves as members to begin their mission at once. But the founding a community is not to be done so easily, and it was deemed advisable that, before taking any further steps in the matter, Amélie should go to Rome and obtain the advice and blessing of the Holy Father on her enterprise. She had never been to Rome, and it was the cherished wish of her life to go there; it drew her as the magnet draws the needle; to her filial Catholic heart Rome was the outer gate of Heaven; it was the home of the Father of Christendom, "the Christ on earth;" it held the tombs of the martyrs, whose blood had consecrated its soil; every stone in its walls spoke of the glories of the Christian Church, that Church which had planted the Cross, redeeming and triumphant, upon the ruins of paganism.

Overjoyed at the necessity which compelled her to fulfil the dearest wish of her heart,

Amélie set out to the eternal city. She received the most paternal welcome from the Holy Father, who had long been familiar with her name, and knew the apostolic manner of life she led at Marseilles. Nothing has transpired of what passed between her and his Holiness concerning the design of forming the community, beyond that he gave her his blessing to the project. The apostolate of thanksgiving amongst the faithful which she had already inaugurated, he most cordially sanctioned, urged her to persevere in it to the utmost; both by the practice of thanksgiving herself, and by stimulating others to adopt it. His Holiness indulgenced some short prayers that she submitted to his approval. I have unfortunately failed in procuring a copy of these, but it may be well to mention that she was in the habit, ever after, of recommending the frequent use of the "Gloria Patri," and the ejaculation "Deo Gratias!" as having been specially commended to her devotion by the Holy Father himself.

An incident occurred during her stay in Rome which Amélie often related as a proof

of the melancholy absence of the spirit of thanksgiving in the world. While waiting one morning for her turn of audience in the ante-chamber of a Cardinal, she got into conversation with the Superior of the Redemptorists in France. Always on the alert to gain a new ally to the cause, she told him the motive of her visit to Rome, and hoped that in his sphere, which was a wide one, he would endeavour to forward her views.

"Ah, madame!" exclaimed the Father, "it is a good thought that God has sent you there, for there is nothing more wanted amongst men than thanksgiving; the story of the nine lepers has been going on just the same these eighteen hundred years. I have been forty years a priest, and during that time I have been called upon to say Masses for every spiritual and temporal want under the sun, *but only once have I been asked to say a Mass of thanksgiving!*"

"Yes, truly, the story of the lepers is just as in the old day when Jesus inquired sorrowfully: "Is there no one but this stranger found to return to give thanks?"

But for all her clear-sightedness to the sins and shortcomings of her day, Amélie was full of hope in it, and few things annoyed her more than to see good people lapse into that lugubrious way, rather common with them, of crying anathema on the times, and despairing of them. Many will recall with a smile her humorous and trenchant denunciations of these croakers; she used to say that she always mistrusted the love and the logic of such people; that those who love God and their fellow-creatures never despair of mankind, but go on working and hoping cheerfully to the end; that despair was a sign of cowardice and of stupidity. And was she not right? Surely every age has in the midst of its ugliness some counterbalancing beauty, some redeeming grace or comeliness in the raiment, let it be ever so soiled and tattered, that hangs about its ulcers and its nakedness.

God never leaves Himself without witnesses on the earth, and it is our fault, not His, if we do not see them; there are always bright spots in humanity, even in its darkest aspects, and those who cannot discern them should blame

the dulness of their own vision. The saints have always been quick enough to see them. As poets who have the mystic eye see beauties of line and colour in the mouldering ruin where common men see only destruction and decay, so do the saints and the saint-like pierce with the keen eye of faith and hope, and love the external darkness and decay of humanity, and discover in the midst of gloom and evil much that is promising and fair; they see elemental wines boiling up in the caldron of travail and suffering, and they know that their bitterness is salutary, and their fire regenerating unto life.

Amélie returned to Marseilles well satisfied with her visit to the eternal city, and resumed her labours with renewed zest and energy. But she had left her heart in Rome, and from the day she quitted it her one desire was to go back and end her days there. Her infirmities had of late increased so painfully, that it became more and more a subject of wonder to those who witnessed her life of incessant activity how she was able to sustain it without flagging for a day. Amélie felt, however, that

the fight could not last much longer, and that the hour of surrender was not far off. Frequently in the whirl of her busy active life she had been heard to express a longing for a life of contemplation, and as the end drew near this longing increased.

"It is high time I left off looking after other people's souls," she would often say at this period to a dear and intimate friend. "I feel the want of more prayer, of greater recollection, of more time before the Blessed Sacrament; really I must begin to get ready."

In the year 1865 she determined to carry this desire into effect, and to begin to get ready, as she called it, by withdrawing into a more solitary life. Her love for the Church, which had always been so entire in its loyalty, gained a new impetus from her personal intercourse with the Holy Father; the *Denier de St. Pierre* counted her from the first among its most zealous supporters, and now enlisted her services more actively than ever. She made an abundant collection just at this time, and this offered her a plausible pretext for going to Rome, in order to lay it at the feet

of the sovereign Pontiff. Without proclaiming any ulterior intentions in the journey, she announced her determination to go with her offering, and began to put her little temporal affairs in order. Her house had been all the year round an hotel for the missionaries who came to Marseilles from every part of France to embark thence for the divers lands whither they were bound; you seldom went there without seeing one or several of the stereotyped little *valises* waiting in the narrow hall. Twelve of these welcome guests were harboured in the Rue Grignan during the last month of Amélie's residence there. This series of hospitalities was her adieu to the time-honoured customs of her youth. She quietly disposed of the house through the agency of a friend, distributed her furniture and books amongst her relatives and friends, and then bidding them farewell, she set her face once more towards Rome.

There remained, however, a last work for her to do for her native town before quitting France for ever. The splendid military hospital of Marseilles, in which she had taken so active

an interest, was served by lay nurses, and both the patients and the authorities were anxious to have these replaced by Sisters of Charity.

Easy as the thing seemed, up to this time every endeavour to effect the substitution had failed. It rested with the Government to make the appointment and grant a sum of money for the maintenance of the community which should be attached to the hospital; but, owing either to the matter not having been properly represented, or to the ill-will of certain officials who threw obstacles in the way, every application on the subject had been met by a refusal. The authorities, seeing all else fail them, bethought themselves of Amélie. They remembered her success in more difficult undertakings, and begged her to go to Paris, and take the affair in hand, and procure the desired concession from the minister. The mission would have been repugnant to her at any time; it was more especially so in her present circumstances and frame of mind. She foresaw that it would compel her to put herself forward in many ways, to go from one official cabinet to another, &c. As, however, there

was a chance of some good coming out of it, she consented to give this last proof of devotion to the soldiers, and to bestir herself to the utmost once again in their service.

She had a military friend in Paris, Colonel Gaillard, who occupied a distinguished position at the *Etat-Major*, and was on good terms with its chief; he was, moreover, a practical Catholic. This gentleman got an audience for her of Marshal Vaillant, who was then minister, and to whom she had been directed in the first instance. The Marshal, previously informed of the subject of her visit, received her in a great rage, and, according to his custom, in shirt sleeves; asked her a dozen questions without giving her time to answer one; wondered what she or anybody else meant by meddling with soldiers and their hospitals, and dictating to him how and by whom they were to be managed; but that was just like women; women were always busying themselves with what did not concern them; for his part he would rather have the command of ten armies than a village full of women, and more in the same style. In fact, he rated his visitor as

roundly as if she had been a runaway soldier, and Amélie took leave of his Excellency after a short audience, during which she had not been allowed to say one word in explanation or self-defence. Clearly there was not much to be done in that quarter, so her friend proposed getting her, without further preamble, an audience of the Emperor.

Amélie preserved a pleasant and grateful recollection of the reception she had met with from his Majesty some years before, and the idea of entering his presence again inspired her with less terror than the prospect of a second edition of the Marshal; she thought, too, that there would be a speedier and better chance of success in applying direct to the Emperor than by beating about the bush with his ministers, even admitting that they were not all of the same type as the one she had seen. She accepted the offer, therefore, and in a few days received a letter from the Lord Chamberlain notifying the day and hour when she was to present herself at the Tuileries.

She was shown into the ante-chamber, where generals, bishops, dignitaries of the state, &c.,

were waiting their turn to enter the Imperial presence. There was some delay before the door opened; when it did it was not his chamberlain, but the Emperor himself who appeared on the threshold. He stood for a moment, and took a deliberate survey of the company, amongst whom he recognised many noble and important personages; then perceiving an elderly lady in a rusty black gown sitting modestly at the furthest end of the room, he walked straight up to her and held out both his hands.

"Mademoiselle Lautard," said his Majesty, "I thank you for the honour you do me by this visit. I am sure I have only to name you for every one present to admit your right to pass before them."

There was a general murmur of assent, though it must have puzzled most, if not all the spectators of this strange scene, who this poverty-stricken, hump-backed, elderly lady was to be thus greeted by Napoleon III., and handed over their heads to the presence chamber. As soon as they were alone the Emperor

drew a chair close to his own, and inviting his visitor to sit down, he said :—

“ Now, tell me if, over and above the pleasure of seeing you, I am to have that of doing something that can give you pleasure ?”

Amélie, in relating the interview, said that when she saw his Majesty bearing down upon her before the assembled multitude in the ante-chamber, she felt ready to sink into the ground, and wished herself at Hong-Kong; but the moment he spoke her terrors vanished, and before she had been ten minutes with him she felt perfectly at her ease, and talked on as fearlessly as if he had been an old friend. She told him her wishes about the hospital, and he promised unconditionally that they should be carried out. For certain formalities, however, it was necessary to refer her to his minister.

“ You will call on Marshal Vaillant,” said his Majesty; “ he is the person to arrange it.”

“ Sire !” exclaimed Amélie, throwing up her hands in dismay, “ anything but that; your Majesty must manage it without sending me again to Marshal Vaillant.”

“ Ah ! you have been to him already,” said

the Emperor, with a quiet smile. "Well, try him again, and this time I warrant you a better reception; he is *bon enfant au fond*, but you must not let him think that you are afraid of him."

Thus warned and encouraged, Amélie promised to take her courage in both her hands, as the Emperor said, and beard the lion once more in his den. Before letting her go his Majesty questioned her minutely about the condition of the hospital and other charitable institutions at Marseilles, concerning all of which he appeared to be singularly well informed.

The next day she presented herself at the Ministère, and was at once ushered into the Marshal's presence. He had his coat on this time; whether the fact was due to accident, or to a desire to propitiate the lady who had complained of him to his master, history does not say; but as soon as Amélie appeared, his Excellency accosted her with—

"Well, so you were affronted with me, it seems! What did you say about me to the Emperor?"

"Excellency," replied Amélie, "I told his Majesty that I had expected to find a minister of France, but that I found, instead, a man in a passion."

The Marshal grunted a laugh, and told her to sit down and explain her business. She did so, this time with perfect satisfaction to both parties, and they parted the best friends in the world.

This incident closed her career of usefulness in France; she waited to make the needful arrangements for the departure of the nuns, their reception at Marseilles, etc., and then she started for Rome.

On setting out to the eternal city, Amélie seemed to have the presentiment that she had entered upon the last stage of her pilgrimage. The sense of her approaching end, which betrayed itself, perhaps unconsciously, in conversing both by word and letter with her most intimate friends, was accompanied by increased fervour, a more profound recollection, and a serenity which struck every one who came in contact with her as something almost divine. The project which she had

formed of founding a community of *Sœurs Réparatrices*, and entering it, not as a foundress, but as a simple member, was still unrealised ; she hoped now to carry it into effect, and to make the remainder of her life a perpetual *Deo gratias*, and so die in the outward livery of the religious state, whose spirit her whole life had so faithfully embodied. But God had other designs on His servant. Meantime, she enjoyed thankfully the twilight interval of solitude and comparative leisure that was granted to her. But though she prayed more and more, and lived in greater retirement, she did not give up all active work ; she still allotted a fair proportion of each day to her accustomed service of the poor and the sick.

Thése were troubled times that Amélie had fallen on in Rome. The sacrilegious hand of parricides had robbed the Church of her possessions, and reduced Pius IX. to the nominal sovereignty of the capital of Christendom, as a prelude to making it what it is now, his prison. Catholic hearts were sad, and flocked round their stricken shepherd to offer

him the tribute of their fidelity and tenderness.

None amongst them sorrowed more truly than Amélie, nor entered with keener sympathy into the griefs and wrongs of the Vicar of Christ. She beheld the persecutions of God's Church, the hatred and malice of its enemies, the cowardice of those who called themselves its friends, but stood by, passive and cold, while the crime perpetrated on Calvary eighteen hundred years ago was renewed before their eyes on the body of that Church which Christ had died to found; she saw pride and materialism everywhere rampant, working to undo His work, to prevent the coming of His kingdom, and to establish the reign of falsehood upon earth; and the sight of all this filled her with sadness; but not with despair.

It was, indeed, an hour of unexampled grief for Christendom, but it was also an hour for chivalrous devotion and strenuous activity; it was the time for each individual member to prove his loyalty to the Head, for all to put their hand to the plough that was furrowing the bosom of the Church, and, as they went, to

water the travailed soil with tears, if need be with blood, thus preparing it for the future harvest that was inevitable. For, even as God's enemies of old had stood at the foot of Calvary, shaking their heads at the Victim of their triumphant hate and envy, and bidding Him come down and save Himself, knowing not, in their blindness, that the dawn of the Resurrection was at hand when He would arise victorious over death, and force them to confess that "this man was, indeed, the Son of God," so now, the enemies of His spouse had their short hour of triumph, and mocked and clapped their hands to see that Church which He had built upon the rock, and promised that the gates of Hell should not prevail against, tottering and crumbling under the blows of progress and the force of arms. Their triumph was but the hour of the powers of darkness that would perish at the appointed time before the manifestation of the Sun of Justice.

Still, even faithful hearts quailed before the storm, and were scandalized to see how God forsook His own, not recognising in this

mysterious abandonment another trait of resemblance between the Christ on earth and that divine model who cried out in His dereliction, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Amélie was compelled to see and hear much that was unutterably painful to her as a true child of the Church; she saw many who called themselves such, who were quick to draw upon the riches of her sacramental treasury, and to praise her in the days of peace, who took scandal at her tribulations, standing timidly aloof when they should have rallied in action, or remaining dumb when they should have spoken, or speaking what had better be left unsaid.

But, alongside of this indifference or treachery, she witnessed a vast deal that was beautiful and consoling. Pilgrims were flocking in from the four quarters of the globe to lay at the feet of the sovereign Pontiff the tribute of their fidelity, together with abundant offerings, often collected in perilous journeys at great risk and sacrifice. Then there were the *Zouaves*, *nos chers Zouaves*, as Amélie called them, presenting a noble ex-

ample to us all by their heroic devotion to the cause of God, their spirit of immolation, their chivalrous daring in action, and the marvellous purity of their lives. These modern crusaders replaced the soldiers of Marseilles in Amélie's solicitude during her stay in Rome. She tended them and worked for them, and in her letters home dwelt continually on the consolation which the spectacle of their child-like piety afforded her. Early in September she wrote to a friend at Marseilles:—

“Our dear Zouaves have made their entry into Rome; they passed under my windows. These young soldiers are the flower of the French nation; they are full of that energy which the spirit of faith alone gives. This morning eighteen hundred of them, bent on shedding their blood in the cause of God, marched proudly into the eternal city with band playing and colours flying; they reminded one of the Theban legion. I witnessed a touching sight. The Holy Father met them on their way, and, like one man, they fell on their knees for his blessing; he gave it to them with visible emotion. How could a father not be

moved by such devotion from his children? The Flemish and the Bretons are chiefly conspicuous; ancient traditions have been preserved amongst them, and have come down from the fathers to the sons. This evening they accompanied his Holiness to the Vatican, where they cheered him with the enthusiasm of Christian hearts. It was impossible to refrain from tears as one beheld the venerable Pontiff rest his loving and gentle gaze on all this youth so devoted to him, and burning to prove its fidelity. In these days the position of the Zouaves amongst Christian soldiers is a noble one. Oh, if the idle youth of France but knew what a happiness it is to serve God how many families would be blest in this world as well as in the next! I see here numbers of young men who had wandered for a time from the right path, but who have had the grace to return to it, and are now as happy as children, pure as angels, attached to the Church and Vicar of Christ; their sole ambition is martyrdom, their joy is to look forward to it. Oh! I see here admirable things. Adieu, dear friend. Let us pray always."

Sinister reports and wild alarms, the result sometimes of malice, sometimes of fear, were constantly starting up in Rome, terrifying the weak, and stimulating the brave to greater vigilance and courage, but keeping every one on the *qui-vive* from day to day. In the midst of this universal excitement the serenity of Pius IX. remained unaltered; his confidence, anchored in the soundless deep of God's Providence, sheltered by the adorable mystery of His unrevealed, unfathomable Will, remained immovable like the rock on which it rested.

Amélie was admitted frequently to the honour of seeing and conversing with the Holy Father, and she was never tired expressing her admiration of the more than earthly peace that radiated from his countenance, and breathed in every word of his conversation.

Shortly before the date of the foregoing letter she wrote to the same friend:—

“The most contradictory stories are afloat here; but the peace, the calm, the *abandon* of the Holy Father are indescribable, and go farther to inspire confidence than the most

sinister reports to create terrors. The daughters of Jerusalem followed our Redeemer to Calvary. A sort of filial sentiment holds me in Rome. *I cannot go away.* Let us pray! Let us pray! The power of prayer obtains all things."

Let us pray! This had been the life-long burden of her song, and the cry grew louder, more intense, as the close of her life drew near. It was not the sterile cry of those who say, Lord! Lord! but the irrepressible voice of a soul possessed by the spirit of prayer in the fulness of its availing power, and side by side with whose growth grew the spirit of sacrifice. Amélie never for one moment let go her hold of hope; but her anguish at the prolonged trials of the Church, and her sense of the outrages that God's glory was enduring in the person of His Vicar, increased more and more; while the consideration of her own nothingness, her utter inability to lighten the cross that was pressing on the saintly Pontiff, pursued her with the mysterious pain that is born of the love of God.

What a wonderful thing the soul of a saint

or even a saint-like human being must be! How one longs to step within the veil, and get a passing glimpse of the life that is lived there! It is so strange to us to see a creature take God's cause to heart and pine and suffer about it as we do about our personal cares and sorrows; it sets us wondering what sort of inner life theirs can be, and through what process of grace, and correspondence, and mysterious training they have grown to that state of mind wherein the things of God and His eternity are poignant realities, and the things of earth hollow phantoms that have lost the power to charm, or terrify, or touch. We see them hungering after justice as we hunger after bread, pining actually for the accomplishment of God's will as eagerly as we pine for the success of our puny enterprises and the triumphs of our small ambitions, and we are astonished, as it behoves our stupidity and the hardness of our hearts to be, at the incomprehensible character of their faith and love. When life presses heavily upon us, when the cross is bruising our shoulders and all things are dark and dreary, we catch ourselves some-

times sighing for death, and this is about our nearest approach to that home-sick yearning expressed in the words of the Apostle: "I long to die, to be dissolved and to be with Christ!"

What an altogether different feeling it must be with these saint-like souls when they long for death! They are not impatient of life, or, like tired travellers, angry with the dust and sun of the road, and disgusted with the uncomfortable way-side inn where they put up; they are impatient of Heaven and of the Vision that makes the bliss and the splendour of Heaven.

Too zealous of their Creator's glory to rob Him even in desire of one year or day or hour of their poor service while He sees good to use it, they are willing to go on toiling through eternity if He wishes it; but they are home-sick, they pine to see Him, to gaze upon His face that is to be their beatitude for all eternity; they yearn after His possession with a sacred unrest which we who have little kinship with their spirit cannot understand. They are saddened by their exile, and by the view of sin, and of the small harvest their

Lord's glory reaps amidst the prolific harvest of iniquity that overruns the earth ; they watch the sea of humanity rolling its waves along the tide of Time, moaning in conscious agonies of sin, storm-lashed and terrible, breaking in billows of impotent rage against the granite rock of Redemption, and dashing headlong past it into the gulf, where all is sucked down into everlasting darkness ; and seeing these things as God sees them, and as they affect His interests, they are filled with sorrow, and they call out for the end, that this mighty torrent may be stayed ; they call out to the stars to rise on the far-off heights that loom dim and gloomy through the swirl and vapour of the storm ; they would fain hush the winds and the waves and hasten the advent of the Judge before whose splendour the dark horizon will vanish, and whose brightness will outshine the sun and fill the universe with joy. It is not their own deliverance that they long for, or the world's annihilation, but its consummation in man's happiness, and the Creator's glory.

Amélie desired with all the strength of her vigorous heart to do something for her

Lord, to help, be it ever so little, towards hastening the coming of His reign before He called her away. One morning after Holy Communion, while she was praying very fervently for Rome, the Church, and the Holy Father, whose health was just then a cause of great anxiety to the faithful, this desire came upon her with an intensity such as she had never before experienced. She was seized with a sudden impulse to offer up the sacrifice of her life in exchange for his, to present herself as a victim in his stead that he might be spared yet awhile to guide the bark of Peter through the stormy seas that were assailing it. The impulse was so strong that it was with difficulty she restrained herself from yielding to it on the spot; the desire of obtaining the blessing of obedience on her sacrifice enabled her, however, to do so. She quietly continued her thanksgiving, and then left the Church, and went straight to the Vatican. There, kneeling at the feet of the suffering Vicar of Christ, she told him of the inspiration that had come to her to offer herself as a victim in his place, should it please God to accept so poor an offer-

ing. Pius IX. was silent for some moments, while Amélie, with clasped hands and uplifted face, awaited his reply. Then, as if obeying a voice that had spoken to him in the silence, he laid his hand upon her head, and said with great solemnity :—

“Go, my daughter, and do as the Spirit of God has prompted you.”

He blessed her with emotion, and she left his presence filled with joy. In the afternoon she wrote two letters. One of them—of too private a character to be given here—contained the foregoing account of the morning’s occurrence; the other is a revelation fuller than any commentary on the state of her soul, and its uppermost thoughts while standing on what she believed to be the threshold of eternity. It runs as follows :—

“Rome, December 15th, Saturday.

“We still continue in the greatest calm. *Nos chers Zouaves* have the courage of lions; they draw their strength from the blood of the martyrs; generally speaking they are pious as angels; you see them constantly during their free hours slipping off their knapsacks and their

arms to go and kneel at the feet of the priest in the Confessional, or to pray at the shrine of the queen of martyrs; they are truly the children of the Church, and”

The sentence was broken off here, and the letter remained unfinished.

The next morning was Sunday. Amélie repaired as usual before daybreak to the first Mass at St. Peter's. She received Holy Communion, and then, with the Eucharistic Presence warm upon her heart, she offered up her life to Him who had been its first, its last, and only love. The words were hardly cold upon her lips when she was seized with sudden and violent pain, and fell with a cry to the ground. She was surrounded immediately and carried home. Several priests and religious of both sexes who knew her, and happened to be present, filled with alarm and distress, accompanied her to the Strada Ripresa dei Barberei. Medical aid was sent for, but it soon became evident that her illness was beyond the reach of human skill. All that day and the next she continued in agonising pain, unable to speak, even to thank those who were minister-

ing to her, except by a smile, or a pressure of the hand.

Early on the ensuing morning, Wednesday, she grew calmer, the pain subsided, and she asked for the last Sacraments. The request was promptly complied with; she received the Viaticum with sentiments of extraordinary devotion, remaining for a considerable time absorbed in prayer. When her thanksgiving was ended, she took leave with tenderness and composure of the friends who surrounded her, and then begged that they would begin the prayers for the dying; they did so, and she joined in the responses with a fervour that went to every heart. When they came to those grand and solemn words with which the Church speeds her children into the presence of their merciful Judge: "Depart, Christian soul, in the name of the Father who created Thee, in the name of the Son who redeemed thee, in the name of the Holy Ghost who sanctified thee," Amélie bowed her head, and died.

The news was conveyed at once to the Vatican. When Pius IX. heard it, he evinced no

surprise, but raising his eyes to Heaven, murmured with a smile: "Si tosto accettato!"*

The announcement of Amélie's death was received with universal expressions of dismay and sorrow. It was not only the poor, who had been her chief and most intimate associates in Rome, that mourned her, all classes of society joined in a chorus of heartfelt regret, and proved how well they had appreciated the gentle French sister who had dwelt humbly amongst them doing good. The house where she lay in her beautiful and heroic death-sleep was besieged by people from every part of the city; all were anxious to gaze once more upon her face, to touch her hands with crosses and rosaries, to kneel in prayer beside the victim who had offered herself for the sins of her people, and been accepted by Him who delighteth not in burnt offerings, but in the sacrifice of a contrite heart. To her truly it had been answered: "Oh, woman, great is thy faith; be it done unto thee according to thy word!"

The miraculous circumstances of her death

* So soon accepted.

were soon proclaimed. In the minds of those who had known her well they excited no surprise; from all they drew forth sentiments of admiration and praise. Tears flowed uninterruptedly by the austere couch where the virgin tabernacle rested from its labours; but they were tears sweeter than the smiles and laughter of earth; prayers for the dead were suspended by common impulse, and the spectators, exchanging the *De profundis* for the *Te Deum* and the *Magnificat*, broke out into hymns of triumph and canticles of rejoicing.

The Zouaves—her beloved Zouaves—hurried in consternation to the house as soon as the news reached them that the kind and devoted friend of the soldier was no more, and it was a beautiful and stirring sight to see them sobbing like children as they touched her hands with their sword-hilts and their rosaries, and swelled in broken but enthusiastic voices the songs of thanksgiving.

The Holy Father, wishing to pay his tribute to the general testimony of love and admiration, commanded that the child of St. Dominick should be carried to the grave with a pomp

and splendour befitting the holiness of her life and the heroic character of her death. The remains were conveyed accordingly to the Basilica of the Apostles in solemn state, escorted by a vast concourse of people, priests, and religious, and exposed there throughout the morning to public veneration; a requiem Mass and the office of the dead were chaunted; in the afternoon the body, followed by all that Rome held of greatest and best, was transported to the church of Santa Maria in Ara-Cœli. The Zouaves claimed the privilege of bearing the precious remains upon their shoulders, and it was granted them. By special permission of his Holiness, Amélie was interred in the vaults of Santa Maria, but no sooner was her death known at Marseilles than the townspeople spontaneously demanded that the body should be returned to them. Pius IX., however, replied that Rome had now a prior claim to its guardianship; Amélie had made the sacrifice of her life for Rome, and it was fitting that the ashes should remain where the holocaust had been offered and consumed. Marseilles bowed to the decision of the Sovereign Pontiff, and

the daughter of St. Dominick was left to sleep on under the august domè of the Ara-Cœli, where she awaits the angel of the Resurrection, whose trumpet shall awake the dead and bid them come forth and clothe themselves with immortality.

APPENDIX.

THE following is the authentic record of this miraculous death, as copied from the original, legalised by Cardinal Patrizzi, vicar of his Holiness :—

“ Je, soussigné, Curé de la très sainte Basilique Constantinienne des douze Apôtres de Rome, certifie que dans le Registre XII. des défunts, lettre *N*, page 283, se trouve l'acte, dont l'extrait mot à mot suit :—

“ Le seize Décembre, mil-huit-cent soixante-six, Mademoiselle Claire François Amélie Lautard de Marseille, fille de Monsieur Jean Baptiste Lautard, vierge très pieuse, pendant qu'elle offrait, Dimanche dernier, à Dieu sa propre vie pour le salut du Souverain Pontife, Pie IX., de Rome, et de la Sainte Église, a été

saisie sur le champ par la maladie, et ayant reçu très pieusement les sacrements de l'Eglise, jouissant de la plénitude de ses facultés, en prière, entourée de plusieurs prêtres et vierges, a rendu son âme à Jésus Christ, son Epoux, avec la plus grande sérénité, le Mercredi, dix-neuf, à neuf heures et demie du matin, dans la maison, Rue Ripresa dei Barberei, 175, à l'âge de cinquante-neuf ans ; son corps, le lendemain, vingt, après le completum, a été conduit, accompagné d'un grand nombre de religieux, en cette Basilique, et y a été exposé pendant la matinée suivant l'usage des nobles, l'office et la Messe ont été dits ; dans l'après-midi le corps a été transporté à l'église de Santa Maria in Ara-Coeli, où il a été enseveli dans le tombeau des Sœurs de St. Joseph de l'Apparition.

“Donné à Rome, etc. . . .”

TRANSLATION.

“I, the undersigned, parish Priest of the most holy Constantinian Basilica of the twelve

Apostles of Rome, certify that in Register XII. of the dead, letter *N*, page 283, is to be found the deed, of which the following is a copy word for word:—

“The sixteenth of December, eighteen hundred and sixty-six, Mademoiselle Claire Françoise Amélie Lautard of Marseilles, daughter of Monsieur Jean Baptiste Lautard, a most pious virgin, while offering, last Sunday, her life to God for the Holy Father, Rome, and the Church, was seized on the spot by illness, and having received most piously the sacraments of the Church, in the full possession of her faculties, in prayer, and surrounded by several priests and virgins, gave up her soul to Jesus Christ, her Spouse, with the greatest serenity on Wednesday, the nineteenth, at half-past nine in the morning, in the house, Rue Ripresa dei Barberei, 175, at the age of fifty-nine years; on the following day, the 20th, her body, after the completum, was carried, accompanied by a great number of religious, to this Basilica, and was exposed during the morning after the custom of nobles, the Office of the Dead and a solemn Mass being

performed ; in the afternoon it was conveyed to the Church of Santa Maria in Ara-Cœli, and there interred in the tomb of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition.

“ Given at Rome, etc. . . . ”

THE END.

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